

Top Tips for Americans Visiting Switzerland

1. **Check your passport validity:** You will be denied entry into Switzerland if your passport is expired or is expiring soon. To enter Switzerland or the Schengen area, **your passport must remain valid for 90 days after your planned date of departure from the Schengen area.** Before leaving the U.S., we recommend having *at least six months validity* remaining on your passport. [More details about Schengen requirements.](#)



2. **Keep track of your time in the Schengen area:** You can travel up to 90 days visa free in Switzerland and the Schengen area. Currently, 26 European countries are members of the Schengen area. Crossing national borders within the Schengen does not count as leaving the Schengen and will not reset the region's 90 day tourist visa. Once you spend 90 days in the Schengen, you must wait another 90 days before re-entering the Schengen area if you do not have a visa. Be sure your passport is stamped when you enter and exit the Schengen area. [More details about Schengen requirements.](#)



3. **Verify your health insurance:** You should know if your health insurance includes international coverage. Many U.S. insurance companies will not pay if you break a leg, get food poisoning, or run out of medication and need to see a doctor outside of the United States. [Check your insurance provider's travel policy before going abroad.](#) If you do have international coverage, carry your policy

identity card as proof of insurance and a claim form. Generally, Medicare does not include international coverage. While the U.S. State Department can assist in locating appropriate medical services, contacting loved ones, and transferring funds from family and friends to citizens overseas, the Department cannot pay medical bills. **If your insurance does not offer overseas coverage, purchase travel insurance before you begin your trip.**



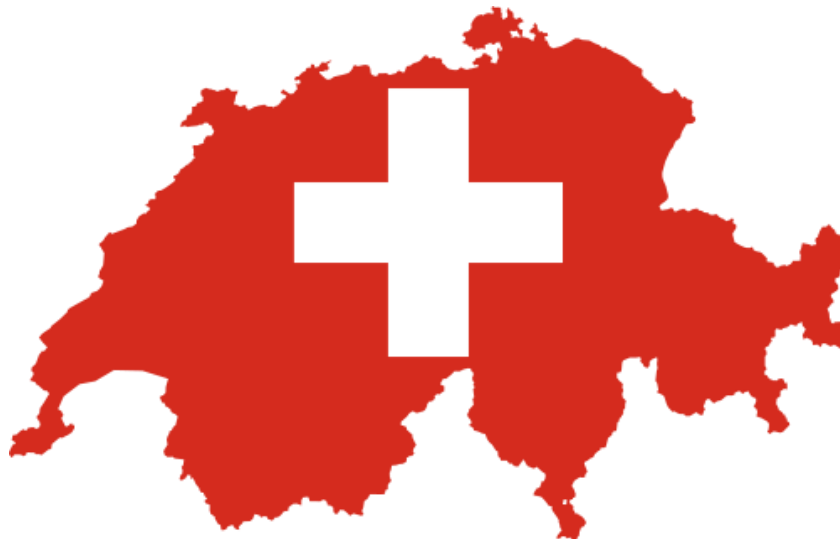
4. **Explore Swiss-style, but be careful:** Switzerland is wonderful, but does have its own dangers. Alpine hazards such as avalanches and snowdrifts, landslides and flooding, glacial crevasses, falling rocks, sun exposure, and sudden weather changes are common year-round. Don't forget to stay on designated paths, follow the advice given by local authorities and guides, check weather forecasts and [snow conditions](#), be in a team of two when participating in mountain activities, and inform someone of your plans and estimated time of return. Swiss citizens know that mountain rescues can be extremely expensive – [they buy a membership in the Swiss mountain rescue service and you can too](#).
5. **Be informed:** For safe travels, [enroll in STEP](#), the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program. STEP provides local security updates and allows the U.S. State Department to contact and assist you in case of emergency. [Research Swiss laws and rules before you go](#). Stay connected with the U.S. Embassy through [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [our webpage](#).



6. **Notify your bank:** Credit cards with microchips and cash are widely accepted in Switzerland and ATMs are plentiful. Before going abroad, notify your bank and credit card companies of your travel and check exchange rates between the U.S. dollar and Swiss franc.
7. **Learn the rules of the road:** Planning to drive in Switzerland? American tourists may use a U.S. driver's license, but check your auto insurance before driving in Switzerland. Swiss road safety standards are high, and some mountain areas require cars to have snow chains in winter. [To travel on expressways, you must purchase a sticker \(vignette\) and place it on the windshield. These are available online, at gas stations, and at border crossings.](#) Rental cars usually have a vignette already, be sure to ask your car rental agency. Failure to comply with traffic rules can result in large fines. In the event of a traffic accident, call the police at 117.



8. **Know who to contact in case of an emergency:** To call the Swiss equivalent of 911, dial 144 for medical and ambulance services and 118 for the fire department.



9. **Try the local cuisine:** No trip to Switzerland is complete without indulging in world famous Swiss [cheese](#) and [chocolate](#)! There are many cheese and chocolate tours which explain the production process

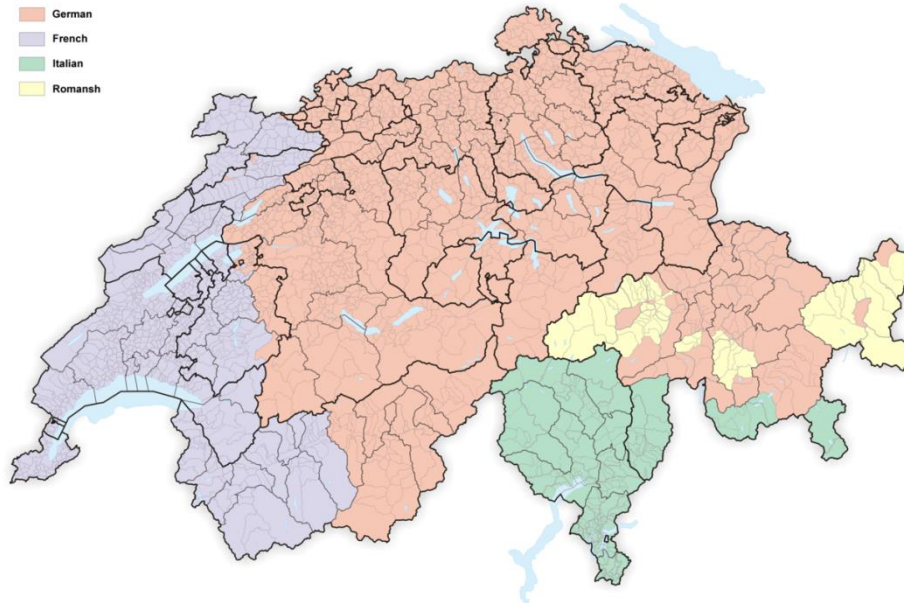
and provide tastings. Some of the more popular Swiss dishes include: fondue, muesli, raclette, and rösti.



10. **Enjoy the breathtaking views:** Don't miss some of the most famous ski resorts in the world such as Zermatt and St. Moritz. At Interlaken, you can enjoy various outdoor activities and take a train to the top of the Jungfrau for incredible views. For world famous waterfalls, go to the town of Lauterbrunnen, home of the Staubbach Falls. When travelling to Switzerland, be prepared for some sticker shock as it is one of the most expensive countries in the world. One bargain here is tipping – it is not necessary to add a tip, but it is common to round up when paying the bill in a restaurant.



11. **Brush up on a foreign language:** Switzerland has four national languages: German, French, Italian, and Romansh. If you do not speak one of these languages, don't worry, English is widely spoken, especially in cities.



12. **Have fun!** No one plans for things to go wrong while traveling. Enjoy your trip and know that the U.S. Embassy in Bern is here to help if something does not go as planned. You can always reach us at BernACS@state.gov or +41 (0) 31-357-7011.



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